FREE TIPS CARDS
NATURAL WORLD

BLUR THE BACKGROUND FOR SHOTS THAT REALLY STAND OUT

WORK EARLY MORNING FOR THE BEST POSSIBLE LIGHT

CONTROL SHARPNESS FOR VISUALLY STRIKING RESULTS

MASTER COLOUR FOR PHOTOS WITH GREATER IMPACT

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**How to get amazing results by working around first light**

- **SHOOT IN GOLDEN HOUR**
  The period around sunrise and sunset is sometimes called ‘golden hour’, when the low sun covers everything in a soft, warm light. Whether you’re shooting flowers, fungi or forests, the natural world will look its very best at this time of day, so it’s well worth setting your alarm early and being ready on location before first light.

- **CATCH THE DEW**
  On many mornings throughout the year, particularly following a clear night, the landscape is coated in a glistening dew. These tiny condensation droplets can bring real impact to your images, especially if you’re shooting spider webs or flowers. Be warned though – dew evaporates quickly once the sun is up.

- **GET STILL CONDITIONS**
  Wind can be a real problem for natural world photographers, especially when shooting macro, where even tiny movements can prohibit a sharp shot. Dawn is usually the least windy time of day, so for outdoor close-ups early morning is usually the best time to work.

- **BEAT THE CROWDS**
  Very few people are out and about around sunrise, so you’ll have the world to yourself. This can be handy when shooting wider scenes in popular locations.

**GEAR ESSENTIALS**

The Photopills app allows you to check sunrise and sunset times for a specific location and date. This helps you get in position at first light. It costs £10 and is available for iOS & Android.

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**How to produce natural world images with amazing colour**

- **USE THE COLOUR WHEEL**
  Some colours work particularly well together, and using the right combinations can really help your shots pop. Complementary colours, which are found opposite each other on the colour wheel, always work well together, so green goes well with red, teal with orange, and yellow with purple. It’s well worth looking up the colour wheel online and memorising the positions.

- **BUY A POLARISER**
  Circular polarisers are most commonly used in landscape photography, but are also very handy for natural world images. Not only will they help remove unwanted reflections from the surface of leaves, but they will also make the colours in your shot more vivid.

- **SHOOT IN RAW**
  RAW images have a greater bit depth than JPEGs, which means they’re made up of far more colours. For natural world photography, this can be really important, so stick to RAW shooting wherever possible.

- **ADJUST VIBRANCE**
  When you get your images home, open them in Photoshop and increase Vibrance (Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation). This will produce a more colourful overall image without oversaturating any areas.

**GEAR ESSENTIALS**

Circular polarisers are inexpensive and can be stashed in a kit bag pocket. You’ll need one that matches your lens’ thread size (usually between 37-82mm). Hoya’s Revo is ideal.

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**How to increase impact with an out-of-focus background**

- **USE A WIDE APERTURE**
  A blurred background is a great way to isolate your subject and help it stand out. The easiest way to do this is by using a wide aperture, such as f/2.8 or f/4, as this produces a shallow depth-of-field. As a general rule, prime lenses (those with a fixed focal length) tend to have a wider maximum aperture than zooms. The exception is macro photography, where the depth-of-field can become too shallow, so you may opt for a narrow aperture instead.

- **USE A LONG LENS**
  Although focal length doesn’t technically impact on depth-of-field, a longer lens magnifies the background, which gives the impression of a greater degree of blur. For this reason, you can help your subject stand out by using telephoto lenses.

- **AVOID CLUTTER**
  If possible, adjust your angle so that the backdrop is as clean and uncluttered as possible, ensuring the viewer isn’t distracted away from the subject.

**GEAR ESSENTIALS**

A medium-length telephoto lens with a wide maximum aperture is ideal for natural world photography. For close-ups, Sigma’s 105mm f/2.8 macro is our recommended option.

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**How to control sharpness for pin-sharp results**

- **FOCUS ACCURATELY**
  To ensure pinpoint focus, activate only the central AF point, which is usually the most accurate. This allows you to ensure a very specific area, such as the centre of a flower, is sharp. However, when using a tripod, many natural world shooters prefer manual focus, using Live View and the zoom button for maximum precision. This is the best method for macro work, where the depth-of-field is very shallow.

- **USE A TRIPOD**
  Working from a sturdy tripod allows you to use manual focus and far slower shutter speeds. However, as they slow down your workflow, they’re much better suited to static subjects, such as flowers, rather than moving ones, such as insects.

- **SHOOT REMOTELY**
  If using a tripod, either select self-timer mode or attach a shutter release cable or wireless trigger. These eliminate the need to physically touch the camera’s shutter button as the exposure starts, eliminating the chance of unwanted blur.

- **USE STABILISATION**
  If shooting handheld, turn on image stabilisation, which will compensate for unwanted camera shake at slower shutter speeds. Turn it off, though, if you’re working from a tripod.

**GEAR ESSENTIALS**

A sturdy tripod is essential for nature photography. Ideally, choose one that allows you to mount your camera very close to the ground such as Manfrotto’s 190 Go!